

company the land so settled upon, which land so settled upon and improved, may, for any cause, be restored to the public domain, and who, at the time of such restoration, may not be entitled to enter and acquire title to such land under the homestead laws of the United States, shall be permitted, at any time within three months after such restoration, and under such rules and regulations as the Secretary of the Interior, or such officer as he may designate, may prescribe, to purchase not to exceed one hundred and sixty acres in extent of the same by legal subdivisions, at the price of \$2.50 per acre, and to receive patents therefor.

(Jan. 13, 1881, ch. 19, 21 Stat. 315; Mar. 3, 1891, ch. 561, §§ 1, 4, 26 Stat. 1095, 1097; Mar. 3, 1893, ch. 208, 27 Stat. 593; 1946 Reorg. Plan No. 3, § 403, eff. July 16, 1946, 11 F.R. 7876, 60 Stat. 1100.)

TRANSFER OF FUNCTIONS

For transfer of functions of other officers, employees, and agencies of Department of the Interior, with certain exceptions, to Secretary of the Interior, with power to delegate, see Reorg. Plan No. 3 of 1950, §§ 1, 2, eff. May 24, 1950, 15 F.R. 3174, 64 Stat. 1262, set out under section 1451 of this title.

"Secretary of the Interior, or such officer as he may designate," substituted for "Commissioner of the General Land Office" on authority of section 403 of Reorg. Plan No. 3 of 1946. See note set out under section 1 of this title.

§ 894. Adjustment of land grants to railroads

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed as of March 3, 1887, to adjust, in accordance with the decisions of the Supreme Court, each of the railroad land grants made by Congress to aid in the construction of railroads and theretofore unadjusted.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 1, 24 Stat. 556.)

§ 895. Cancellation of patents erroneously issued; reconveyance

If it shall appear, upon the completion of such adjustments, respectively, or sooner, that lands were, from any cause, prior to March 3, 1887, erroneously certified or patented, by the United States, to or for the use or benefit of any company claiming by, through, or under grant from the United States, to aid in the construction of a railroad, it shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Interior to thereupon demand from such company a relinquishment or reconveyance to the United States of all such lands, whether within granted or indemnity limits; and if such company shall neglect or fail to so reconvey such lands to the United States within ninety days after the aforesaid demand shall have been made, it shall thereupon be the duty of the Attorney General to commence and prosecute in the proper courts the necessary proceedings to cancel all patents, certification, or other evidence of title prior to March 3, 1887, issued for such lands, and to restore the title thereof to the United States.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 2, 24 Stat. 556.)

§ 896. Erroneous cancellation of bona fide entries corrected

If, in the adjustment of said grants, it shall appear that the homestead or preemption entry

of any bona fide settler has been erroneously canceled on account of any railroad grant or the withdrawal of public lands from market, such settler upon application shall be reinstated in all his rights and allowed to perfect his entry by complying with the public-land laws: *Provided*, That he has not located another claim or made an entry in lieu of the one so erroneously canceled: *And provided also*, That he did not voluntarily abandon said original entry: *And provided further*, That if any of said settlers do not renew their application to be reinstated within a reasonable time, to be fixed by the Secretary of the Interior, then all such unclaimed lands shall be disposed of under the public-land laws, with priority of right given to bona fide purchasers of said unclaimed lands, if any, and if there be no such purchasers, then to bona fide settlers residing thereon.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 3, 24 Stat. 557.)

§ 897. Patents to purchasers from railroads; purchase money

As to all lands, except those mentioned in section 896 of this title, which have been so erroneously certified or patented as aforesaid, and which have been sold by the grantee company to citizens of the United States, or to persons who have declared their intention to become such citizens, the person or persons so purchasing in good faith, his heirs or assigns, shall be entitled to the land so purchased, upon making proof of the fact of such purchase at the proper land office, within such time and under such rules as may be prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior, after the grants respectively shall have been adjusted; and patents of the United States shall issue therefor, and shall relate back to the date of the original certification or patenting, and the Secretary of the Interior, on behalf of the United States, shall demand payment from the company which has so disposed of such lands of an amount equal to the Government price of similar lands; and in case of neglect or refusal of such company to make payment as hereafter specified, within ninety days after the demand shall have been made, the Attorney General shall cause suit or suits to be brought against such company for the said amount: *Provided*, That nothing in sections 894 to 899 of this title shall prevent any purchaser of lands erroneously withdrawn, certified, or patented as aforesaid from recovering the purchase money therefor from the grantee company, less the amount paid to the United States by such company as by said sections required: *And provided*, That a mortgage or pledge of said lands by the company shall not be considered as a sale for the purpose of said sections, nor shall said sections be construed as a declaration of forfeiture of any portion of any land grant for conditions broken, or as authorizing an entry for the same, or as a waiver of any rights that the United States may have on account of any breach of said conditions. *Provided further*, That where such purchasers, their heirs or assigns, have paid only a portion of the purchase price to the company, which is less than the Government price of similar lands, they shall be required, before the delivery of patent for their lands, to pay to the

Government a sum equal to the difference between the portion of the purchase price so paid and the Government price, and in such case the amount demanded from the company shall be the amount paid to it by such purchaser.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 4, 24 Stat. 557; Feb. 12, 1896, ch. 18, 29 Stat. 6.)

§ 898. Rights of purchasers from railroads of coterminous lands not within grants

Where any said company shall have sold to citizens of the United States, or to persons who have declared their intention to become such citizens, as a part of its grant, lands not conveyed to or for the use of such company, said lands being the numbered sections prescribed in the grant, and being coterminous with the constructed parts of said road, and where the lands so sold are for any reason excepted from the operation of the grant to said company, it shall be lawful for the bona fide purchaser thereof from said company to make payment to the United States for said lands at the ordinary Government price for like lands, and thereupon patents shall issue therefor to the said bona fide purchaser, his heirs or assigns: *Provided*, That all lands shall be excepted from the provisions of this section which at the date of such sales were in the bona fide occupation of adverse claimants under the preemption or homestead laws of the United States, and whose claims and occupation have not since been voluntarily abandoned, as to which excepted lands the said preemption and homestead claimants shall be permitted to perfect their proofs and entries and receive patents therefor: *Provided further*, That this section shall not apply to lands settled upon subsequent to the 1st day of December, 1882, by persons claiming to enter the same under the settlement laws of the United States, as to which lands the parties claiming the same as aforesaid shall be entitled to prove up and enter as in other like cases.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 5, 24 Stat. 557.)

§ 899. Limitation of quantity to be conveyed

No more lands shall be certified or conveyed to any State or to any corporation or individual, for the benefit of either of the companies herein mentioned, where it shall appear to the Secretary of the Interior that such transfers may create an excess over the quantity of lands to which such State, corporation, or individual would be rightfully entitled.

(Mar. 3, 1887, ch. 376, § 7, 24 Stat. 558.)

§ 900. Suits to cancel patents to lands erroneously issued under railroad or wagon-road grants

Suits by the United States to vacate and annul any patent to lands erroneously issued under a railroad or wagon-road grant shall only be brought within six years after the date of the issuance of such patents. But no patent to any lands held by a bona fide purchaser shall be vacated or annulled, but the right and title of such purchaser is hereby confirmed: *Provided*, That no suit shall be brought or maintained, nor shall recovery be had for lands or the value thereof, that were certified or patented in lieu of other

lands covered by a grant which were lost or relinquished by the grantee in consequence of the failure of the Government or its officers to withdraw the same from sale or entry.

(Mar. 2, 1896, ch. 39, § 1, 29 Stat. 42.)

§ 901. Claims of bona fide purchasers; establishment of rights

If any person claiming to be a bona fide purchaser of any lands erroneously patented or certified shall present his claim to the Secretary of the Interior prior to the institution of a suit to cancel a patent or certification, and if it shall appear that he is a bona fide purchaser, the Secretary of the Interior shall request that suit be brought in such case against the patentee, or the corporation, company, person, or association of persons for whose benefit the certification was made, for the value of said land, which in no case shall be more than the minimum Government price thereof, and the title of such claimant shall stand confirmed. An adverse decision by the Secretary of the Interior on the bona fides of such claimant shall not be conclusive of his rights, and if such claimant, or one claiming to be a bona fide purchaser, but who has not submitted his claim to the Secretary of the Interior, is made a party to such suit, and if found by the court to be a bona fide purchaser, the court shall decree a confirmation of the title, and shall render a decree in behalf of the United States against the patentee, corporation, company, person, or association of persons for whose benefit the certification was made for the value of the land as hereinbefore provided. Any bona fide purchaser of lands patented or certified to a railroad company, and who is not made a party to such suit, and who has not submitted his claim to the Secretary of the Interior, may establish his right as such bona fide purchaser in any United States court having jurisdiction of the subject matter, or at his option, as prescribed in sections 896 and 897 of this title.

(Mar. 2, 1896, ch. 39, § 2, 29 Stat. 43.)

§ 902. Cancellation; investigation before suit

If at any time prior to the institution of suit by the Attorney General to cancel any patent or certification of lands erroneously patented or certified a claim or statement is presented to the Secretary of the Interior by or on behalf of any person or persons, corporation or corporations, claiming that such person or persons, corporation or corporations, is a bona fide purchaser or are bona fide purchasers of any patented or certified land by deed or contract or otherwise, from or through the original patentee or corporation to which patent or certification was issued, no suit or action shall be brought to cancel or annul the patent or certification for said land until such claim is investigated in said Department of the Interior; and if it shall appear that such person or corporation is a bona fide purchaser as aforesaid, or that such persons or corporations are such bona fide purchasers, then no such suit shall be instituted and the title of such claimant or claimants shall stand confirmed; but the Secretary of the Interior